



Planning for the Future:
Resource Management Plan for Public Land
Administered by the BLM Butte Field Office in the
Mid-Western Portion of Montana



The Butte Field Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is starting a process to revise the Headwaters Resource Management Plan (RMP) for public land and resources it manages in eight counties in mid-western Montana. The RMP will address management concerns for surface and mineral estate land administered by the BLM in the planning area, and will provide a comprehensive framework for managing and allocating public land and resources. The RMP will specify what public and commercial uses can occur, and under what conditions these uses are appropriate. As part of the RMP, a supporting environmental impact statement (EIS) will also be prepared. The EIS will address a wide variety of issues and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives for resource management in the planning area.

Public involvement will be a critical component of the planning process. Everyone will be given an opportunity to participate meaningfully and to provide input and comments during the preparation of the RMP/EIS. The BLM would like input and feedback on planning-level issues, planning criteria, and plan implementation. The

BLM would also like input on potential special designation areas, including areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and rivers which meet special criteria under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Even if you do not wish to comment at this time, you must return the business reply mailing sheet at the back of this brochure in order to stay on our mailing list for this project. If we do not hear from you, we will remove your name from our mailing list so we do not continue sending unwanted information regarding the Butte RMP. If you are interested in the future management of public land administered by the Butte Field Office, we invite you to become involved and lend your voice as we begin to revise the RMP.

WHY WE NEED AN RMP

Land within the planning area is currently managed according to the 1984 Headwaters Resource Management Plan. Over the past 20 years, changes have occurred in

resource conditions and the way public land is used. Emerging issues related to topics such as threatened and endangered species, road and trail management, and fuels management need to be addressed. A new RMP will address these concerns and incorporate changes in planning and resource program guidelines that have developed at the national level. Finally, jurisdictional boundaries have changed since the time the Headwaters RMP was developed. Land in five counties that was covered in the Headwaters RMP is now managed by the Lewistown Field Office. The Butte RMP will cover all of the public and mineral estate land within the Butte Field Office boundary.

THE PLANNING AREA

The planning area for the Butte RMP consists of approximately 311,000 acres of public land (and 656,000 acres of mineral estate) in eight counties: Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Park, Silver Bow, and a small portion of Beaverhead County along the Big Hole River.

THE RMP/EIS PLANNING PROCESS

Preparing the RMP is a nine-step process (see box below). Some steps occur at the same time and it may be necessary to repeat a step as additional information becomes available. The RMP which results from this process helps field managers make decisions and guides staff efforts on a day-to-day basis. Where more detailed management direction is required, we will prepare and analyze activity plans after the RMP is completed.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

1. Identify Issues
2. Develop Planning Criteria
3. Compile Inventory Data and Information
4. Analyze the Management Situation
5. Formulate Alternatives
6. Estimate Effects
7. Select a Preferred Alternative (Draft EIS)
8. Release Proposed RMP/Final EIS
9. Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate

PLANNING ISSUES

A planning issue is identified as a matter of controversy or dispute over resource management activities or land use. Preliminary planning issues have been identified, but new ones may be identified based on public input during the scoping process. The preliminary planning issues for

the Butte RMP have been identified as:

- Vegetation Management
- Special Status Species (threatened, endangered, proposed, sensitive)
- Water Quality/Quantity/Aquatic Species
- Travel Management and Access
- Special Management Area Designation
- Commercial Uses
- Land Ownership Adjustments

PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are the guidelines or ground rules that direct preparation of the RMP. They help ensure that the plan is tailored to the identified planning issues and help to avoid unnecessary data collection and analyses. They are based on applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, and the results of coordination with the public and other federal, state, and local agencies, and Native American tribes. Preliminary planning criteria have been developed but are subject to modification during the scoping process. Examples of preliminary criteria to be used in development of the RMP include the following:

- The planning process will include an EIS that will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.
- The plan will recognize the State of Montana's responsibility to manage wildlife populations, including uses such as hunting and fishing, within the planning area.
- The RMP will incorporate by reference all prior Wilderness Study Area findings that affect public land.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents will be recognized in the plan.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA DESIGNATION

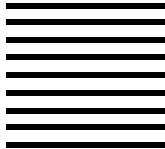
The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) directs the BLM to use the planning process to "give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern (**ACECs**)". In the 1984 Headwaters RMP, several areas were nominated as candidates for consideration as ACECs. Most of these areas were along the Rocky Mountain Front and are no longer in the Butte RMP planning area; the Butte Field Office currently manages one ACEC-the Sleeping Giant ACEC north of Helena. Additional nominations will be requested during the RMP formal scoping procedures so that evaluations can be considered as part of the comprehensive RMP process. To be considered a potential ACEC, an area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance as

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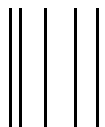
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established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7- 2. Nominations must include descriptive materials, detailed maps, and evidence supporting the “relevance” and “importance” of the resource or area. All nominations which meet the ACEC criteria will be studied further during development of the RMP. Please contact the Butte Field Office for more information on nominating ACECs.

In addition, streams in the planning area are currently being evaluated for eligibility and suitability under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. These are streams that have been identified as free-flowing and possessing outstandingly remarkable values. The public will be invited to comment on a draft eligibility report describing which streams are being evaluated for this designation, and final recommendations will be made in the draft and final RMP documents.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The RMP revision process is expected to take three years to complete. There are many milestones along the way with the major milestones listed below. A more detailed schedule will be developed after the scoping process is completed.

12/19/03	Publish Notice of Intent (NOI) in Federal Register
2/17/04	Formal Scoping Period Ends
Summer 2004	Compile Scoping Report
Fall 2004	Release Proposed Planning Scenario for Comment
Spring 2005	Complete Alternative Formulation
Fall 2005	Release Draft RMP/EIS – Begin 90-day comment period
Summer 2006	Release Final EIS – Begin 30-day Protest Period
Fall 2006	Issue Record of Decision

SCOPING MEETINGS

Six scoping meetings have been scheduled to provide additional information on the RMP revision and to solicit comments (see box below).

Tuesday - Jan 6 - Helena. Helena Chamber of Commerce, Helena, 225 Cruise Avenue (7:00 pm - downstairs conference room)
Thursday - Jan 8 - Boulder. Boulder Elementary School Library (7:00 pm)
Tuesday - Jan 13 - Divide. The Divide Community Hall (2:00 pm)
Tuesday - Jan 13 evening - Butte. BLM Butte Field Office, 106 N. Parkmont (7:00 pm)
Wednesday - Jan 14 - Bozeman. Best Western Grantree Inn Conference Center - Madison Room, 1325 N. 7th Avenue (7:00 pm)
Thursday - Jan 15 - Townsend. Community Room, Townsend School Library (7:00 pm)

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND STAY INVOLVED

During the RMP revision process there will be numerous opportunities for the public and stakeholders to shape the RMP. Some ways to be involved in this initial scoping period are listed below; however, public involvement will be ongoing throughout the RMP revision and the public will be notified as future opportunities occur.

Website: We invite you to browse our website at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/bdo/>, where we will post up-to-date information about the planning process. You can also use the website to submit comments.

Mailing list: To get on our mailing list, register on the website or return the mailing sheet included in this brochure (cut out, re-fold, and staple closed) to the BLM Butte Field Office. No postage is needed. We will use the mailing list to keep you updated throughout the planning process. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of the comment section. Requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. IF WE DO NOT HEAR FROM YOU, WE WILL REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM THE LIST SO YOU DO NOT RECEIVE UNWANTED MAIL.

Scoping Meetings: Come to a scoping meeting to get additional background information and express your thoughts and concerns about public land managed by the BLM Butte Field Office. The meetings will be an open house format. Locations, dates and times are listed in this brochure.

Written Comments. Send us written comments either by regular mail or e-mail. Send regular mail to: Ruth Miller, Bureau of Land Management, Butte Field Office, 106 N. Parkmont, Butte, Montana 59701. Send e-mail to Ruth_Miller@blm.gov. We need to receive written comments on issues, planning criteria, and ACECs by February 17, 2004 in order to give your comments full consideration as we move forward in this planning process. If you have questions, please contact Ruth Miller, RMP Project Leader, at the BLM Butte Field Office, (406) 533-7645.

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